

Historic switchback RR donated to public

BLAKESLEE — A five-mile length of the historic Switchback Railroad — opened in 1827 and widely publicized as "the oldest railroad in America" — traversing the Northeast Land Company property located in the area between Summit Hill and Jim Thorpe, will be donated for public use, it was announced here by Curtis W. Kemmerer, president of the company.

The gift of land for public use provides a total uninterrupted length along its five miles with varying widths of from 20 feet to 100 feet. The land area approximates 15 acres.

Kemmerer said the transfer of the Switchback right-of-way is expected to take place

in June. Northeast Land is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Blue Ridge Real Estate Company, which over recent years has been involved in similar donations of land for a number of public projects, including:

- The site in East Jim Thorpe upon which the Carbon County Vocational Technical High School now stands;
- A site in the Hauto Valley now occupied by Green Acres and 40 acres with frontage on Industrial Park;

- A 14-acre tract given to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to activate the Lehigh River Gorge State Park.

The land to be donated abuts other property owned by Northeast Land near Rt. 902 and Legislative Rt. 13033,

the latter known to local residents as the Lentz Trail, north of the recently constructed 330-acre Mauch Chunk Creek Watershed lake which is a combination recreational and flood control facility in the valley lying below Summit Hill eastwardly to Jim Thorpe.

"These adjoining lands — including separate tracks of 31 and 40 acres with frontage on

the Lentz Trail and 230 acres on the mountain overlooking the lake will continue to be available to prospective purchasers," Kemmerer said.

The Northeast Land president indicated that when his company has discussed the sale of its holdings, potential purchasers were encouraged to preserve the Switchback right of way.

"Now," Kemmerer said, "in

treating the property in its several obvious compartments, the historic right of way will be preserved by its donation for public use."

Northeast Land and the Carbon County Recreation Authority have been conducting conversations recently on the possibility of the Authority purchasing the acreage on

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